[A Day at Mary Rumbley's House]

Glen Haven Cotton Mill

Burlington, N. C.

October 31, 1938

I. L. M.

A DAY AT MARY RUMBLEY'S HOUSE

They still call her Mary Rumbley. She says that she was already twenty-four when she married John Cates, and her neighbors so long accustomed to addressing her as Mary Rumbley kept it up even after she was married.

Above her mantel there hangs a framed family record. It is a picture containing garlands of roses, an open book, and two centrally placed ovals bearing the words Father, Mother. On the leaf of the open book the following recordings have been made: Mary Rumbley born Oct. 10, 1878; John Cates born May 9, 1876; Sam Cates born Oct. 1, 1902; Zettie Gates born June 3, 1905, Ira Cates born Sept. 5, 1910; John Cates died April 23, 1926; Sam Cates died Aug. 11, 1930.

I went to see Mary the other morning, a brisk October morning it was, and Mary was dropping a piece of coal on the fire when I opened the door in response to her “Come in.” When she saw that I was not a neighbor, she got up and came toward me apologetically. “I thought you was one of Della Webster's children,” she explained. “Set down in that chair. 'Spot, git down and let the lady have a seat.' When Iry or company ain't here the kitten restes in that chair while I set in this one. Me and him both is pretty lazy, I reckin.”

It was nine o'clock in the morning and Mary's house had already been put in order for the day. The room in which we sat had not been difficult to straighten. It contained an iron bed, an old Singer sewing machine, a small walnut table and the two rocking chairs before the fire. Sweeping must have been the most difficult job she had to perform because the floor was old and splintery. Many bright colored pictures, most of them calendars, were nailed to the dingy gray walls but, 2 firmly fixed against the walls as they were, they added nothing to the burden of housekeeping. After finishing with her room there was only Ira's room and the kitchen to put in order.

Mary had arisen at six-thirty in order to have Ira's breakfast ready when he got in from the mill. Breakfast over, house-cleaning finished, and pinto beans in the pot ready to boil for dinner, she had begun at 9 o'clock to set the morning away. “I'm glad you come by,” she said as I rocked slowly in my chair. “I like company, for the days is long since I got disabled to work in the mill.” She gave a quick, throaty chuckle which was a spontaneous expression of her pleasure at having someone to talk to, and then lapsed into silence.

Her little, grayish brown eyes caught up the firelight and shone with a brightness like eyes belonging to some wood's animal. Though not actually very small, they looked somehow like tiny bright openings in her narrow face. All of Mary's teeth were gone, and because there had been no false ones to replace them her chin had turned upward with an apparent determination to meet her nose. Her thin and graying red hair was combed tightly up and twisted into a flat knot on the top of her head. She wore a print dress of beet-red with a tiny white figure, and bedroom slippers of sky-blue felt.

“Have you lived very long at the Glen Raven Mill?” I asked.

“Since it were first started,” Mary said. “The Rumbleys were up there on opening day to help break in the machinery. Old Mr. Gant owned the Altamaha Mill where we worked and he got us to move here. He wanted families that he knowed was good workers to start his new mill.

“Ma moved to the cotton mill when I were nine years old. There w'an't nobody to work then but me and her and Alice. Pa, he was deformed, and he couldn't do no work like that, though he had as clever a turn as you ever seen at some things. He 3 walked on his knees — born that way, you know. The rest of his leg dragged on the ground and his feet turned out. Ma had six children by him and not a one of us was deformed.

“Pa had a good education and he teached some sort of school once up in Rockingham County where he was born. They was eleven in his family and granpa owned his own farm. Pa had books, too, but he got shet of all of 'em but one. Hit's old, awful old, and somebody told me once that if I'd write off to the American Book Mart I'd find out I could git a right smart for it. I told 'em maybe so, but not as much as that book was wuth to me. I'll git it and show it to you. I keep it in the drawer of my wa'nut table that pa made.

“Uh, uh. I liked to fell. I ain't got good used to them bedroom slippers yet. Iry jest got 'em Saturday and they've got a little more heel than them others I had. Here 'tis, right in the drawer where I put it. Hit's so old it's turned yellow. You can see for yourself when it was printed.”

I took the small book from Mary's hand, opened it and read:

Christian Psalms and Hymns:

To Aid in

Public and Private Devotion

selected and arranged

by Jasper Hasen

Albany, N. Y.

Published for the Association

1849

On the fly leaf written in brown ink were the words:

Aaron Rumbley

his book

October the 19 day 1850 4 I turned a leaf and read the foreword in which Isaac Watus, Wesley, Doddridge, Newton, and Montgomery were listed as contributors.

“It's a nice book,” I said, looking up at Mary. “I guess you've read in it many times.”

“Not nary time,” Mary said solemnly as she looked at me with her small, bright eyes. “I've got no education atall.

“I woulder had if pa hader lived,” she continued presently. I had given her back the book and she sat there holding it with both her hands. “He learnt me some spellin', and how to write my name, but hit were a little bit I knowed that in time I forgot it all.

“As I told you, I w'an't but nine when I went to work in the mill, and when I'd come home of a night I never felt much like learnin'. Sometimes pa'd make me do a little spellin' but I never done so well at it. Then pa died when I was twelve, and after that they weren't nobody to try to learn me. Ma never had a day's schoolin' in her life but she worked as hard for her family as any woman I ever knowed.

“Ma was a Williams, born in Chatham County. Her pa owned a little farm there before the Rebel War. His two sons was killed in that war and it seems plumb funny to me they had to go. Grandpa Williams never owned no slaves nor Grandpa Rumbley neither. Truth to tell none of my folks never did. Like I asked my brother one day, have you ever knowed of any

niggers in this part of the State taking the name Rumbley or Williams? Just the same them uncles had to go and they both got killed. Grandpa Williams sold his farm or lost it one — I don't know which — and moved to Rockingham County. He died soon after and that left granny and ma to git a living the best way/ they could. It wasn't long until ma met pa and they was married.

“Pa's old maid aunt — Dora was her name — died and willed him a house and 5 a little land at Graham Depot. That's how ma and pa happened to come to Alamance County. Pa made might nigh all the furniture they had in the house and it was pretty too. Beds outa white maple, and not a one of 'em in the family now. He sold 'em during hard times.

“Pa provided us a decent livin' even if he was deformed. He made furniture, horse collars, and shoes. I've set up many a day all day long placin' pegs for him to drive in the holes he's made with a awl. He fastened the soles and the uppers together with wooden pegs, you know.

“Ma, she worked in the field and raised a good part of what we eat. She could plough as good as any man and she was never one for shirkin' work — no kind of work. Of course when she married she brought granny along, her not havin' nowhere else to go.

“Granny had turned blind by the time I come along, had big cataracts on both eyes. A quare sort of thing happened to her and she got to where she could see for awhile. She were comin' outa the kitchen and she dropped her knittin'. When she reached down to pick it up she hit one eye on the end of a chair post. In a few days, when it quit hurtin' her so, she was gettin' a little glimmer of light through that eye. Not long after that, granny went out with me and my sister to gather some peaches. Alice, she were up in the tree ready to shake it when she hollered to granny not to look up. For some reason though, granny done jest what Alice had told her not to, and a big, hard peach come down and hit her ka-plop right in the other eye. And I want you to know that for a while Granny could see well enough to know when a person was before her vision though she couldn't recogise who it

was. What had happened, them cataracts had busted. Once they growed back she wore in plumb darkness and she never had sight agin.

“I done a awful mean thing to the poor old woman and her helpless blind too.

6

I've thought about it many a time since and wondered what ever made me do sech a thing. Granny smoked a pipe, a clay pipe and I got mighty tired of it. One day when ma was out in the field, and the little children was outa doors playin' — I was about eight then myself — time come to fill the pipe. I knowed it was comin, and I'd set there and thought this meanness out. I tuk that pipe and cleaned it out real good. In the bottom I put a little tobacco and then I went over to the powder horn hangin' on the wall. I put a little pinch of power in on top of the tobacco, and thinkin' all the time I mustn't put enough to hurt granny. I put tobacco on top of that and handed it to her.

“Granny started puffin'. I remember jest as well how she looked, a old woman her eyes closed up with them cataracts and her hunched over puffin' at that long-handled pipe. 'Pu, pu, pu, pew,' she was sayin' between each draw. And I was settin' there as still as a mouse, waitin' and gettin' a little bit scared. 'pu, pu, — pew,' granny kept sayin' with here pipe. But even that puffin' didn't seem to make a real sound in the room. Hit were quiet, awful quiet. hen of a sudden they was a loud pop and the bowl of that pipe went in one direction and the stem in t'other. When Granny got settled good enough to speak she said, 'All right, young lady, when your mammy comes you'll pay for that.' Mama come in at dinner time and granny told her what I'd done. She looked at me and she said, 'What made you do sech a thing, honey?' And all I could answer was, 'To have some fun, Ma.' 'I'll learn you how to have fun,' Ma said. She jerked me up and give me sech a floggin' I ain't forgot it till yet. Worst part of it all, though, granny never would let me light her pipe for her as long as she lived.

“Granny died just before we moved to the mill — the Carolina Cotton Mill down on the river. Ma had already got jobs for me and her and Alice. She drawed 25¢ a day and we drawed 10¢ a day. Pa stayed at home with the children. 7 It was winter time when we first went there and we started to work by lantern light and quit by lantern light, the kerosene lanterns swinging down from the ceiling. I never seen no electric lights until we moved to Hopedale two year later. The first mornin' I went in the mill I kept alookin' up wonderin' what on earth them things was. I walked over to the woman I was to work with and I asked her, 'What sort of bugs is them up there on the ceiling'?' That sure tickled her and she never let me forget it long as I stayed there.

“Pa died the first year we was at Hopedale. His death was jest the beginnin' of a long, hard time. George had growed big enough to go in the mill, makin' four of us to draw money. Come summer, Alice tuk the typhoid. Then George. Ma had to stay outa the mill to wait on 'em. That left lone me makin 10¢ a day for the family to live on. But the neighbors was awful good to us and they brought in rashions. If they hadner we woulder starved. I reckin. Alice was still awful puny when she went back to the mill. And the very day she went to work I tuk down with the fever. It was hard times fer us and hard on poor Ma.

“I must've been around fourteen when we left Hopedale for Altamaha. But before we left Hopedale I'd learnt that a little grit'll help a body along. I hadn't been back to work long after the typhoid when I went to my boss and done straight talkin'. I think I'm worth more than 10¢ a day,' I said to him. And he raised me to 20¢. Ma had got up to 50¢ and he raised Alice same as he did me. I was around 15 when Mr. [?] got us to move here to Glen Raven to help open up. I've been here off an on ever since. I've been in this one house nigh on to 20 years. Hit oughter be mine by now.

“Hit ain't been long ago I said to Rogers Gant — him and his brother Allen runs the mill now — 'You oughter make me a deed to my house.' He answered right quick and said, 'Well, I'll send you a bill for the paint when we paint it.' As you can 8 see it ain't been

painted yet — and I disremember just the last time it did git paint. Hit's a awful dingy little shanty but hit's been home to me for a right smart while.

“Come on out on the back porch and I'll show you my flowers. I've got three peach trees out there, too, that I planted when they was nothin' but seedlings. They bore right good peaches this year.”

Mary got up to put her book in the drawer. “Wish Pa hader kept more of 'em,” she said as she turned away from the table and led the way through the kitchen to her back porch. Out there around the edge of the floor were ten or twelve cans and buckets containing flowers, some of which had never grown since they were set out as cuttings. But there was one bright coleus, luxuriant with life, and when I looked at it, Mary said, “That's my prize. Hit's growed from the first and ain't slacked since. Some of these others ain't done so well but I like tendin' to 'em, coaxin' 'em along sorta. And I planted them flowers you see out there in the yard too. Digging's hard on me but I do love flowers, I shore do. I had my womb tuk out about 15 year ago and I ain't been much fit fer heavy work since. But I'd dig a while and rest a while. You can see bunched over there together them october pinks and marygolds and bachelor buttons. They are about gone now but I've had a sight of blooms from 'em. I had petunias scattered all over the place and they was colorful all through the summer. A neighbor give me them three burning bushes the past spring. I set that poplar out myself about fifteen year ago. They call it a London poplar.”

“I see you have a vegetable garden,” I remarked.

“Yes, a piece of one. Iry ain't no good atall fer workin' in a garden. Truth to tell, he jest won't do it. I dug up a little patch and planted a few hills of okry and corn and tomatoes. Right over there I had beans planted, but a neighbor ploughed that patch fer me. Hit made pretty good beans too.”

We stood there fer awhile in silence while the warm October sunshine beamed down on us and dispelled to some extent the chilliness of the accompanying breeze. “Haint the sunshine good?” Mary said presently. “And the fresh air too. Most days even through the winter I put on my old bonnet and sweater and come out here and set awhile. I caint get along like some folks without fresh air.

“That's half of what's wrong with Zettie's baby. Livin' like they do up there above the old bus station with jest one window in the whole place. I went up there the other day and told Clarence — that's Zettie's husband — he jest had to git them younguns out from there and move 'em to a place where they could play around on the ground sometimes. Poor little things, cooped up there with no place atall to play. I forget what the doctor calls what the baby's got, but he says the white cells is eatin' up the red cells. I think half of what's wrong with it is she's needin' fresh air and sunshine.

“The baby was puny when Zettie first brought it down here from New York. Clarence had got work up there somewhere in a cotton mill and was makin' a good wage but the mill shut down. That's why they come back home. While they was up there Zettie's second baby was born. Hit were just three months old when she brought it down here and the puniest lookin' thing you ever seen, and It born in a hospital up there too. Well, when she come in the door I looked at it and said, 'Zettie, what on earth's ailin' your baby?” And she said, 'I don't know Ma, it never had done no good.' 'Hit's starvin' to death,' I said. 'I'll put it on Borden's milk and you'll see a change in no time.' And sure enough, the little thing growed off real healthy. But since they started livin' above that old bus station it's got as puny as it were to start with. Clarence'll shore have to rent a place where them children can git outa doors. Course, he don't make much, workin' for the PWA but they can do without somethin' else and git a house to live in.

“I've got a picture of Zettie's oldest, and she's shore a pretty youngun. Come on in and I'll show it to you.”

Back in Mary's room I looked at the picture of a bright-faced, curly haired child dressed in a fluffy white dress, slippers, and socks. “She is very pretty indeed,” I said as Mary stood waiting.

“It was tuk when she were two year old,” she said. “She's four now and jest as pretty as ever. Della Webster says she's the prettiest youngun she ever seen. Della'll more'n likely come over this evenin'. She gen'lly comes to see me for a little while every day.”

While I sat there listening to Mary tell of other things which made up her daily life Ira came from his room where he had been sleeping since breakfast.

“What's wrong? Caint you sleep?” Mary asked. “Taint twelve yet. That's my youngest,” she continued, turning toward me.

Ira looked at me and nodded in a solemn sort of way, and then went into the kitchen to get himself a chair.

Ira was about six feet two inches in height, measuring straight and not around the slouchy stoop of his shoulders. His eyes of indefinite blue were not so small nor bright as his mother's. There was nothing of brightness in his long, expressionless face except the occasional suggestion of a smile which invariably faded away before reaching its full-grown proportions.

“You never put on your brown suit,” Mary said to Ira. “I bet you're waitin' to put on your new one to wear up town, she finished, giving her characteristic throaty chuckle with its underlying metallic tones.

“Naw I ain't, Ira replied, annoyed. “I may not even go to town today.”

“Thought you'd have to go to make the paymint on your suits.” Then turning to me Mary continued. “Mr. Howard sent Iry a letter not long ago sayin' he had some awful good suits for twenty-seven dollars and a half, and he was throwing in a pair of shoes with every suit. When Iry read the letter he said, 'Mama I believe I'll git me a suit. Hit's jest two dollars down plus tax, and a dollar a week.'

11

I said 'Well, Iry, think twice before you act because they's a sight of things has to be paid for already outa them twelve dollars a week you make.' Hit ended with him gittin' a plumb pretty suit — oxford gray, 'tis. I try to git him to wear the brown one he got last winter, and hold off that new one till Christmas.”

Ira rammed his hands deeper into his overall pockets, pushed his chair back on its hind legs, and said nothing.

“I threatens him every now and then with gettin' me a job,” Mary continued as she looked at me. “I am an old rat at the barn, but I believe I could still do mill work if they'd let me.”

“If I hear of you goin' out makin' for a job I'll quit work and you'll have to take care of me,” Ira said, coming very close to a smile.

“They wouldn't have me nohow,” Mary replied dryly. “Once a person breaks down in health and goes back fer his job, they always say they ain't got one fer him. I broke down at fifty and I've never got back in the mill. I missed it, too, fer a long time because it was all I really knowed how to do.

“But I'm here to tell you I learned mill work from a to ism. I could do anything they was to do but run the cards and the lappers. In them days machinery weren't speeded up and a body could catch up with his work and go over to see what his neighbor was doing. When

I went avisitin' I went alearnin'. That's why they could put me in pretty near any part of the mill and I could hold down the work."

"There's sure no chance now to learn anything but the job they put you on," Ira said. "You don't never catch up with you work enough to go see that the other fellow is doin'. Weaving's the job I first learnt in the mill but I don't get to do that. They use me for a handy man because I don't grumble when they tell me to do odd jobs of cleanin' and such. They keep promisin' me some looms but I don't never get 'em. A man can make a decent livin' weavin'."

"I could weave, I could shore weave," Mary declared. "Ma and all her 12 children was good hands in the mill. Old Jim Reid would tell you that if he was livin'."

"Well, Ma, I got to on down to the mill to get my check," Ira interrupted. "I'll be back by dinner time."

"Lordy me, I'd better see if them pintos is boiled dry." Mary said as she got up from her chair. "I put a heap of water on 'em but they've been cookin' a long time. Come on in the kitchen and you can talk while I make bread," she continued. "As for that, I can talk and make bread, too. I hope you'll stay for dinner."

"I really should be going," I said following Mary into the kitchen. "It's nice of you to ask me, though."

"I don't blame you for not stayin' for we don't have no fine rashins. You maybe couldn't eat what we'll have noway."

"Oh, I'm sure I'd enjoy eating with you," I said, "but I really ought to be going in a few minutes."

“If you don't think the rashins is too sorry fer you, I'll be disappointed if you don't stay. I'm gonna lay a plate for you anyhow.”

With the matter of whether or not I should stay to dinner still unsettled between us, I settled myself in a chair and Mary as she moved about the kitchen. After adding water to the pinto beans she began to sift flour for biscuit.

“Yes sir, Jim Reid was sure one to know whether the [Rumbleys?] was good workers or not,” Mary said as she knocked the sifter with the edge of her hand. “Back in 1917 we had already worked for him 25 year. Tell you how come I remember that so well.

“John Gates was workin' over at Haw River that year and he wasn't at home much of the time. I'd tuk boarders off and on fer years, and one May Clara Brown come 13 to me and said she wanted to board at my house. She was stayin' with [Emma?] Bridget and she said Emma were mean to her. I told her I'd make room fer her, and I never thought no more about it until I seen Emma comin' to my alley not so long before dinner time. She walked up to me and said, 'So you've tuk my boarder.' I answered right quick, 'I've done no such a thing. Clara come to me and asked to be tuk in.' 'Well, I'll whup you at dinner time,' Emma said and frisked away.

“I knowed they was liable to be trouble so I went to Jim Reid. He was a big , red-faced Irishman, who'd been superintendent fer the Gents at Altamaha and then Glen Haven. He never spoke like we do, and it was funny to hear him roll my name around his tongue.

“I said to Jim Reid, 'The [Rumbleys?] have worked fer you a right smart while, ain't they?'

“'For to be sure, Mar-rey,' he said. 'It's all of 25 year you've worked fer me.'

“I'd like to know if you think we've been good hands,' I said to him.

“'The Rumbleys have been fine workers and givin' me no trouble atall,' he said.

“Emma Bridget is threatenin' to whup me because her boarder is comin' to my house,' I told him then.

“Old man Jim Reid looked at me right hard before he spoke. Then he said, 'You ain't being' afraid of her, are you, Mar-rey?'

“'No, I'm not,' I said to him right quick.

“Jim Ried straightened up in his chair and he said, 'Stay out of trouble if you can, Mar-rey, but if Emma comes botherin' you, give her all you've got in your shop.'

“Well, dinnertime come. I was goin' home to dinner, botherin' nobody atall. Emma, she came along and kept runnin' up against me like a rooster. At first I paid her no attention. But Emma was itchin' fer a fight and she wouldn't leave me alone.

All of a sudden I decided not to take it no longer. And when she come sidein' up to me agin I were ready for her. I hauled away and slapped her and it never tuk but that one blow to knock her down.

“That day at quittin' time, Jim Ried called all the Bridgets in and give 'em their time. It was two or three years before they ever got on at this mill agin. When they did come back me and Emma was just as friendly as anything. I don't know where Emma's livin' now.

“Yes sir, I've been at Glen Haven fer a long time. Of course, I were off with John Gates a year or so every now and then, and they was one year I spent in South Carolina when I were 17 year old.”

“Mary's refernce to her stay in South Carolina, seemed to draw her against her will into silience. The kitchen was full of quietness except for the occasional thump against the cook table of the bowl in which Mary kneaded her dough. I looked around the kitchen at

the cleanly-scrubbed pans hung against the wall. There was a gourd, too, and a string of dried red peppers. There was a squatty brass kettle with a cover over its spout which looked like a chicken's head. The old-fashioned tin safe in the corner had sometime in it's past acquired two upper glass doors. From the shelves inside hung lace paper doilies, held in place by blue flowered bowls. Over in another corner a big wooden box, raised from the floor by iron legs, served as a place for storing quilts and old clothes not in use. Mary's cook table was large enough to hold a small tub of water, and to give her working space too. A shelf across from the table held a basket of water for drinking purposes.

“Where do you get your water from?” I asked Mary, suddenly realizing that there were no water pipes in the kitchen.

“From a well out there by the side of the house. It's awful convenient fer me, havin' the well close by. Some of 'em living' on this hill has to tote water for a long way.”

15

Mary talked on while she pinched off big wads of dough placing them in the long black pan and patting them down with the back of her hand. “No rollin' pin and fancy cut-out biscuit for me,” she said. “I cook'em thick, too, so's they'll be a heap of crumb. Little thin biscuits wa'n't meant for guming',” she continued, laughing at herself as she spoke.

Just as Mary started toward the stove with her pan now filled and ready for baking, she looked up at me and gave a quick, loud chuckle. “Lordy me, I don't know where in the world my manners has been all mornin'. Rest your hat.”

Laughing with Mary, I removed my hat and put it on a near-by chair post.

“Dinner'll be ready in a little while,” she said. “Iry oughter be gettin' in soon.”

I had when I removed my hat unconsciously accepted Mary's invitation to dinner. Before long the odor of baking biscuit began to mingle with that of the boiling pinto beans. I made up my mind they'd go very nicely together.

When Mary had got the fly swatter down off the safe, and killed to her complete satisfaction the only fly in the kitchen, she drew up a chair in front of the stove, and resumed her conversation.

“I've got a bowl of stewed apples, too,” she said. “Nearly every day I cook Irish potatoes, and pintos, and I'm glad when I have a change. We don't care much fer meat and I reckin it's a good thing we don't. On the little bit Iry makes we couldn't buy steak and roast, and such like. Iry gits him a little mess of liver puddin' near 'bout every pay day ad that's all the meat we buy. I don't like it myself and it gen'ly lasts him for two meals. The doctor tells me to eat chicken and fish. I get my chicken when I go to a supper at the church - and fish, too, if you count oysters. The members of my class know I ain't makin' nothin' now and they don't expect me to pay. I go over and stay all day to help with the work and that pays for my meal.

16

“What we have we uses and what we don't have we do without. I don't believe in makin' no big debts. Hit's jest been fer the past three months that Iry has had regular work. For five or six month he'd been gettin' one, two, or three days a week. We done what we could during work times to prepare for short times. We'd buy up flour, lard, and coffee knowin' we could make out if we had bread and coffee. But one time when things was so bad and the mill wa'n't runnin' atall we never had even bread in the house. I went up to Rogers' office and I said, 'Rogers, I'm hungry.' He looked at me jest like he never knowed what to say for a minute, and then he spoke, 'Miss Mary, haven't you got anything to eat at your house?' I said, 'Not a bite.' He run his hand down his pocket and pulled out a ten-dollar bill.

He said, 'Miss Mary, go buy yourself somethin' to eat.' Rogers cant's a good-hearted man. I've knowed him ever since he was a child.

“Last year I was sick with the bloody flux, been in bed from Tuesday to Saturday. I hadn't had no doctor, and I kept hopin, I could pull through without one. Then Saturday morning in come Dr. Berry and asked me how I were gettin' along. Said he'd heard I were a little sick and he thought he'd come to see about me. It turned out Rogers had heard about me bein' sick and he sent the doctor. That evenin' Rogers hisself come by. When he left here he went by the store and ordered chicken soup and fruit juices and told'em to bring it up here to me. I hadn't been able to stand the thoughts of eatin', but when Della fixed that chicken soup up it looked good. I eat a few spoonfuls and from that I got to where I could take other rashins. Hit were jest the thing I needed.

“I believe I can eat all right,” I said. I watched Mary pour the steaming beans, the color of dried locust, into a big yellow bowl. She went over to the 17 safe and got the bowl of stewed apples, left there from yesterday's dinner. She took from the big crumby biscuits browned to dark gold on top, and put them on a thick, big-flowered plate. She opened a pint jar of relish, stuck a spoon in it and placed it close to the beans. While Ira was washing his hands in the tin pan beside the water bucket, she filled three enormous cups with coffee and placed them in deep saucers at the three places she had set when we first came in.

“Pull up to the table,” Mary said to me, and I did. Ira came presently and took his place just as his mother sat down. Mary placed her hands together, held them close against the edge of the table, and bowed her head. “Dear Lord, make us thankful fer what we are about to receive, and fer all the blessings we receive at thy hand. In Jesus' name we ask it, amen.” Her blessing finished, Mary began to dip up the pinto beans into blue flowered bowls, passing one to me and then one to Ira. “Here's a spoon,” she said to me. “I forgot to put one at your place.”

“Try some of my ketch-up in them beans,” she continued, passing the pickle relish to me. “Hit helps 'em out a whole lot.”

I mixed the pickle into the beans as Mary directed me, reached for one of the big biscuits; I bit into it and found it good in spite of its size. We sat there, the three of us, without much talk for while and ate our pinto beans and biscuits.

“A man workin' as hard as I do oughter make $15 a week,” Ira said after conversation had been dead for three or four minutes.

“We could make our pretty well with that much,” Mary said. “Buy meat now and then, though neither one of us is much of a hand fer it.”

“They could pay me that much, too,” Ira continued as he scooped up a spoonful of beans. “The mill's makin money and I know it. They sell enough cloth.”

“Them Gants has always made money,” Mary said presently. “They've sure got fine houses. Rogers' and Allen's two old-maid sisters got the brick that had been used in the old Allendale Mill to build their house. The brick must've been all of a hundred year old, and I was sure tickled at Nora Long when me and her went by to see the house while they was still building on it. Nora looked at it fer a few minutes and then she said, 'Why, it looks old before they finish it.' I said, “Well Nora, that's jest the way they want it to look. It's a an-tick house.' Nora said, maybe so, but she never wanted no new house lookin' old. It was sure fine on the inside, too, all fixed up with wa'nut panelling.”

“I seen Nora when I went after my check,” Ira said to Mary. “She's gettin' a Larkin order up and she said she'd be by this evenin' to see if you wouldn't give her one.”

“I do need a pair of scissors like they sell to cut my fingernails with,” Mary said.

We finished our beans and Ira excused himself, saying he wasn't very hungry today.

I could not drink Mary's coffee. It tasted like the odor of molding cornstalks, and while the odor was not particularly offensive to my nostrils it was definitely so to my palate. “Don't you drink coffee?' Mary asked me, observing that I had not drunk any after the first sip.

“Too much coffee is not good for me,” I answered.

“Hit don't hurt me,” Mary replied, and reached for my cup of coffee. She poured it into her deep saucer and began to drink.

When we had finished with dinner I offered to help Mary with the dishes but she insisted that she'd rather do them by herself, and suggested that I go into her room where I could have a more comfortable chair. While Mary washed the dishes I sat and looked at the smiling picture of Dick Powell which hung by its frame from 19 a nail placed directly in the corner and above the walnut table.

It was not long until Mary joined me, and by the time she had seated herself and had her mouth comfortably filled with snuff Ira came from his room to say he was ready to write down the grocery list. He sat down, paper and pencil in hand, and waited for Mary to speak.

“Flour's got to come this week,” she said. “Put down pinto beans and dried butterbeans, too. I've got enough potatoes to carry me through. Three cans of pet milk, and two pounds of lard.”

“Anything else?”

“My snuff.”

“I'll get some liver puddin', too,”

“I reckin so, but jest enough fer yourself. I don't want none.”

“Is that all?”

“I'd like to have a dozen eggs but they are awful high and hard to git. You might git some turnip greens, too, it he's got any.”

Just as Ira folded the list and put it into his pocket someone knocked on the door, opened it, and came in.

“Let me make you acquainted with Della Webster,” Mary said to me. “She lives right across the road.”

Della was a pale-faced woman of perhaps twenty-five. She had supplied herself with a generous dip of snuff which gave a slight fullness to one side of her face. Presently her four year old daughter came in and leaned against her mother's knee.

“I sent her up to the Baptist Sunday School, but she never liked it,” Della said as she brushed the child's hair back from her forehead.

“You ought to send her to the Methodist,” Mary said, chuckling. “I bet she'd like our Sunday School.”

“Law, the Baptist have been carryin' on a real revival,” Della states. “Kaynes is sure a strict one. He don't believe in folks goin' to no picture show atall.”

“And I don't neither,” Mary spoke decisively, “Hit's wrong.”

“Why do you think so?” I asked.

“Because it's the devil's territory.” Mary replied promptly. “If eternity should come and you'd be caught on the devil's territory what hope could you have? Do you go to shows?” she question me.

“Yes,” I admitted. “I don't feel that It's wrong.”

“Have you ever got down on your knees and asked God if it was wrong?” she wanted to know.

“No, I really haven't,” I answered.

“Well, when you do he'll let you know it's wrong.”

“Some folks says the Bible speaks against snuff-dippin',” Della Webster said as she spat into the tin can close to her chair.

Mary waited a full half minute before she spoke. “Well, I've never heard it were a sin, and the Lord's never told me it was.”

“Have you ever asked the Lord if it was wrong?” Della wanted to know.

“No, I ain't”, Mary admitted, “but good as I love it I could quit snuff if I knowed it was sinnin' to use it.”

“The Bible says it's a sin to eat anything that parts the hoof and don't chew the cud,” Ira said. “And most folks sure do that.”

“We ain't tempted none with breakin' that part of the scripture,” Mary said. “They're very little meat comes into this house and no hog meat atall.”

I sat there thinking of the fat meat with which Mary had seasoned her beans, and decided that hog meat to her must mean pork chops, ham, or bacon.

21

“Kaynes's against Christmas tree in churches,” Della said.

“We have one every year at our church,” Mary said. “You've got to do somethin' to entice little children to Sunday School, and they shore oughter be there.”

Mary and Della and Ira sat very quiet for while, each one seemingly trying to bring out of memory some miraculous portion of scripture which condemned the habits of mankind. Mary spoke first.

“If you go to Deuteronomy you'll see it's wrong for a woman to bob her hair,” she said, Then looking at me she asked, “Have you always your hair long?”

“Since I was a child,” I replied, quite pleased to gain back some of the prestige I had lost in admitting that I attended picture shows.

“Well, Deuteronomy says that/ your hair is your glory and you are the glory of men. If a woman cut her hair let her also shave.”

Della toyed nervously with the bobbed ends of her permanent and could think of no defense to offer for them.

“Some times I'm afraid to do almost anything,” she said after awhile.

“You'll have to try to get over some of your fears,” I said hoping to be both helpful and unoffending. “Fear can keep us from enjoying life.”

“But how you going to do it?” Della inquired.

“Fight against it,” Mary said quickly. “Jest keep sayin' to yourself, 'I wan't be afraid, I won't be afraid.' Hit helps.”

“I'm honestly afraid to be in the house a minute after dark when Paul ain't at home, and he has to work at night.”

“I stay here by my lone self and don't mind it atall,” Mary said.

“You know you don't like it, Ma,” Ira said. “I'd get somebody to stay with you at night if I could.”

“Well of course hit's a lonesome time to set here by myself, it bein' human nature to want company, but I sure ain't afraid, I sure ain't.”

22

“Them's good rulesto go by,” Mary continued, pointing to the red felt square above her bed on which were written in white letters, “Rules for Today.”

“I caint read it but I know what it says.”

Della and I both turned our eyes toward the bed and read silently: “Do nothing that you would not want to be doing when Jesus comes. “Go to no place where you would not like to be found when Jesus comes. “Say nothing that you would not like to be saying when Jesus comes.

And while we were reading Nora Long came into the room with her Larkin Plan Book. After Mary had introduced Nora to me and she had greeted the remainder of the group, Della got up to leave. “You needn't be runnin' from me, Della, because I've already got your order,” Nora said with a high, fluty laugh.

“Paul's got to eat before he goes on at three,” Della explained, “and it's past two now.”

Nora had heavy black hair, drawn back into a ponderous knot on the back of her head. Her face was lean and narrow, and taken with the rest of her head reminded me of a picture

too small for its frame. Before she opened her order book she talked lengthily of her bad health while she moved about in her chair with the alertness of a sparrow.

“I've had all my teeth pulled since I seen you, Mary. We was over at Graham then, and my health got down to nothin'. The Doctor said I was being slowly poisoned to death with pyorrhea. Then on top of that I took the old pellagra and I got so nervous thought for sure I'd lose my mind. I actually got so weak I'd 23 gave out before I walked from my house to the mill, and Frank bought a old trap of a car to take me in. I worked when I couldn't hold up my head for long at a time. Every few minutes I'd go and lean over on the doff box till a little strength would come back to me, and I'd go at it agin. Frank tried his best to make me stay at home but it seemed like I just had to work.

“When I'd got down to eighty-five pounds I went and had all my teeth took out and some false ones made.”

“How much them cost you?” Mary asked.

“Fifty dollars.”

“Hunh, I guess I'll keep on a gummin', then. I'd thought maybe I might git some in a year but if they cost like that I ain't likely to.”

“I thought I'd never get mine paid for, but I was sure glad to have them old diseased teeth outa my mouth. I felt sorta like the girl I heard about one time. Her teeth never looked to be in bad shape, but everytime she eat anything sweet they ached her pretty near to death. She went to the dentist and said, 'Clean 'em out, but put 'em aside somewhere and save 'em for me.' The dentist thought that was awful queer but he saved 'em for her, and she wrapped 'em up and took 'em home. She went in the kitchen, spread them teeth on a newspaper, and poured molasses all over 'em. She said to the teeth, 'Ache now, damn you, ache.” I felt like saying to mine, 'Make my puny if you can, make me puny if you can.'”

All of us joined Nora in her laughter.

When the laughter had died away Nora got down to business, “I'm gettin' up a eleven dollar and a half order, Mary, so's I can get me a rug. I know you'd want to take somethin' from me.”

“I've been wantin' some scissors to cut my fingernails with and they've got some in the Larkin book that's good fer each. Zettie used to have a pair when she 24 worked in the weaveroom, and whenever she'd bring 'em home I'd get 'em and trim my nails. Give me the book, Nora. I think I know just where they are.”

“I've got six dollars and a half on it already,” Nora said as Mary looked for the scissors. “I sure hope I can finish it because I'm needin' the rug and I ain't able to buy one. The mill at Graham was about done for so long and when it started up it curtailed for so long that we got in bad shape. We got clear outa clothes, pretty near naked the whole family was. It don't seem like we'll ever catch up.

“Maybe it'll be better since Frances has got to makin' pretty good at the hosiery mill. At least she can take care of herself. She drawed $17 last pay day — that was for two weeks. Back in the summer I tried to get her to go in the mill with me so I could learn her up. She said, no indeed, she didn't intend ever to work in a cotton mill. She was goin't to get herself a job in a full-fashioned hosiery mill. Well, the child walked herself nearly to death goin' backwards and forwards to the different mills. Finally she got on at the mill across over yonder where they make socks. She hated to take it because she said it looked like whatever kind of work you started in that's where you had to stay the rest of your life. She couldn't turn down this other job, though, while she waited for the full-fashioned mills to take her on. When she learns up good so she can turn off enough work I think she'll do all right where she is.”

“Here they is,” Mary said, pointing to the scissors she wanted. That'll be a dollar, won't it? 'Twas when Zettie got hers.”

“That's it,” Nora said as she painstakingly recorded the order on the order blank in her lap. “Now Iry, what do you want?” she continued as she passed the book over to him.

While Ira was turning through the book to make his selection Nora turned to 25 Mary and asked, “Is the woman boardin' with you?”

“No, she's jest a friend come by to visit me,” Mary explained. “I wouldn't mind havin' one or two girl boarders though. Maybe I could buy me a radio like I done when I kept Rhody and Mary. I had a single bed in here for myself and they slept on my bed. Them girls stayed with me for nearly a year. That's how I bought the radio I used to have.”

“What become of it?” Nora wanted to know.

“I sold it to Ed Glenn for $6. Hit cost me $27.50 — paid a dollar a week on it — and after I had used it two year it wa'n't worth a thing.”

“I'll take this hair tonic and this belt buckle,” Ira said, getting up to hand the book to Nora. “Tonic's 30¢ and the belt 50¢, ain't it?”

“No, Iry, you ain't readin' it right,” Nora declared. “The premium price is 60¢ for the hair tonic and a dollar for the buckle.”

“Oh, is it?” Ira said to Nora who, busy recording the order, had obviously never thoughtthat the unexpected price would cause Ira to change his mind. And Ira, though his surprise had manifested itself in his quick change of expression, stuck by his bargain.

“Why are there two prices listed?” I asked Nora.

“Well, you see women all over the country form Larkin clubs and order off after things, payin' cash and not gettin' a premium. Like if you ordered the hair tonic through a club it would be 30¢. But when I'm gettin' a premium you have to pay the premium price which is 60¢. Larkin stuff comes high but it's awful good.

“I reckin I better be goin' on down to the glory hole,” Nora continued. “Why, it's twenty minutes to three,” she said after consulting the big gold watch on her wrist. “If I take about $2 worth myself I'll pretty near have my order up, won't I?”

Nora said good-bye, and in a moment she and her plan book were gone. “Iry, I reckin you better go on to the store and git your groceries,” Mary said after the door had closed behind Nora.

I sat and rocked slowly in my chair while Mary took a tin box from her dress pocket and poured snuff into her mouth. Once the snuff had settled into position so that speech was easy, Mary said, “Della do look stringy but she's peart enough. Them teeth cost aplenty too. I reckin I won't git none. It costs when the body gits wrong. Back in 1912 I was in the hospital for a operation and it cost me $75. I wore there agin in 1922 and it cost me $150. There year ago Ivy had a operation for rupture and it cost him $150. Hit looked like he'd never git that one paid for. Rogers Gent had made the arrangements at the hospital and when Iry went back to work he took out so much a week. Taint been long neither since he stopped takin' out for it.”

I agreed with Mary that doctor's bills were always hard for most of us to pay, and from that we went to other things. Mary told me of Doris Paradise, a French girl, and stepdaughter to the overseer, whom she had learnt up in the mill, and how the women would group around her to get her to talk in her queer language, they not knowing any more than a doddle in the woods what she was saying.

Finally Mary got around to talking about education again. It was such a handy thing to have, she said, and a body didn't know how unconvenient it was not to know how to read. She She'd told her children, “I want you all to get a education. I never got one, and I know how bad a person needs one. Hit'll be nice fer me, too, havin' my children with learnin' enough to read to me.

Zettie, she went to the seventh grade,” Mary continued, “and Iry he quit in the sixth. Sam — he's the one that's dead — went as fer as the sixth too. Zettie was good about readin' to me when she were at home. I took the “Comfort” then, and 27 she'd read me the little stories and then turn over to the ads and read them too. I miss her about helpin' me with my Sunday School lesson more than anything, I reckin. Most times I don't git to study it atall before I go to church.”

“Would you like for me to read next Sunday's lesson to you?” I asked.

“Why sure I'd like it if you don't mind doin' it,” She said, her face brightening.

“Get your book,” I said, and Mary went over to the little walnut table, got her quarterly, and handed it to me. “You can explain it to me, too,” she said.

I think I shall always remember how Mary looked as she sat there in her chair, her hands folded in her lap and her shoulders curved in their peculiar accent of weariness. Her little bright eyes were fastened on me with intense interest, and once or twice when I looked up while reading the quarterly's interpretation of the scripture to ascertain if Mary was following the trend of thought presented, I saw only that she was following every movement of my lips as they read the words. The process of one reading without faltering held a singular fascination for her and the reading itself had become inconsequential.

When I had finished reading all the story as it was explained in the quarterly, I told it to Mary in simpler words than the quarterly had used, but with the same interpretation. The lesson based on scripture from Ecclesiastes was, in brief, as follows: A man looking

for peace tried wisdom and found it not. Wisdom failing, he tried the things of the world, particularly the constant use of wines, but peace did not come. Next, he tried the acquisition of material things, building for himself fine castles and filling them with the treasurers of the world, but still there was no [dawn?] of peace. Finally, he found the love of God and with it came peace.

“That's a good lesson and I thank you for readin' it to me,” Mary said when 28 I had finished. “The love of God can keep you from bein' so awful lonesome sometimes too when you are settin' in a house by yourself thinkin' of the things that's tuk place in your life.”

There followed a silence broken only by the ticking sound of the clock on the mantel. A full minute passed before Mary spoke again.

“Of course I could marry but it would sure seem foolish at my age.”

“Yes,” I agreed. “You'd rather stay on here and keep house for Ira.”

“I wouldn't have to do much talkin' for old man Whitt to marry me and I know it. As I said, taint no sense in it though. I caint do family duty no more, and Mr. Whitt sure/ is too old to make me a livin'. He ain't worked none/ in years.

“I know I'm too old to marry but I ain't too old to think about one I used to love. That were way back when I were seventeen year old.”

Those last words had a reminiscent sound and suddenly I remembered the expression on Mary's face earlier in the day when she had told me of spending a year with her uncle's family when she was seventeen years old.

“Was that when you were in South Carolina?” I asked.

“Yes,” / she answered. “He lived in Columbia, South Carolina, and I met him the year I stayed with Uncle Zeke.

“Uncle Zeke had nine children of his own, but he'd tuk a likin' to me when he come up to see us one time. He kept after Ma to let me come down there and work in the mill with his family. He seemed to think a year away from home would do me good because I'd been so tied down ever since I was child. They was three others at home to help Ma so she let me go.

“Not long after I got there a big revival started. One of the leaders in the choir was Walter Jones. He were 32 year old then and everybody said they'd never knowed him to keep company with a girl. But the girls was crazy about him. I'd seed in the mill that they'd buy fruit and give it to him, and little flowers to 29 wear on his coat too. He'd take them flowers and that fruit and give it to the doffer to bring to me. I'd take it of course, never thinkin' nothin' about it because nobody had made me acquainted with him and he'd never made a chance to speak to me. I was struck on him jest like the rest of the girls but not nary soul but me knowed it.

“When I went to the meetin' I set up there thinkin' what a pretty boy he was and wishin' he'd get struck on me. And that very night after church I seen him go over to his pa and speak a few words. Lela Belle, Uncle Zeke's daughter was right behind me and she whispered 'Walter Jones is goin' to take some girl home because he was askin' his pa to close up the church for him.' I sorta slowed down then, waitin' to see who he was goin' to walk home with. And when I got even with the door he stepped up and asked me fer my company. I never had been so happy in all my life, and I felt awful bashful too, because I knowed everybody were lookin' at us. “From that, me and Walter got to keepin' company and we went together fer nine whole months. It was shore a strange thing how I took to doin' after I found out he loved me. Sometimes when he'd come of a Sunday evenin' I'd

be gone out with a crowd of young folks, but Walter would set right there and talk to Uncle Zeke until I got back. There was times when I even wondered if I really loved him.

“Then one Sunday when he come he wanted to set the weddin' date. That pleased me and I knew in reason I loved him well enough to marry him. We decided to git married at the church the next Sunday, and I were goin' to ask off from the mill for a week so's I could make me up some clothes.

“About four o'clock Walter said his head was hurtin' so bad he thought he'd best go home and rest/ a while before church time.

“That night all Uncle Zeke's girls had done gone on to church with their fellows and still Walter hadn't come. After while I heard steps but they never 30 sounded like his. I went to the door and it was his brother John.

“Miss Mary,' he said, Walter asked me to come and take you to church tonight. He's right bad off. We've just had the doctor and he says its typhoid fever.'

“I never wanted to go to church and I told him so. Then after thinkin' a minute I changed my mind because I knowed Walter were such a Christian he'd be disappointed in me if I missed a single Sunday night. I'd gone regular since me and him started keepin' company.

Of course I never went to no town to buy a weddin' dress on Monday. I went to the mill every day during the week and of a evenin' when I'd get home Aunt Minnie would ask me if I didn't think I oughter go see Walter. Well, sir, I were so afraid in them days of somebody talking about me that nothin' she said could git me to go see that boy. Then too, I've always thought they must of been something in the way Aunt Minnie talked to me that kept me away from Walter. They was two of her girls that had tried to strike his fancy even before he started keepin' company with me.

“On the next Monday evening when I were checkin' up and gettin' ready to go home I seen Mr. Jones comin' toward me. He walked up to me and he said, 'Mary, Walter wants you.' I thought to my soul I couldn't speak, but finally the words come to me. I'll be there after supper,' I told him. 'Don't put it off, Mary,' he said, 'or it might be too late.' They was tears in his eyes when he turned away and they was plenty standin' by to see it. I knowed the house wouldn't be empty when I went that night.

“But I hadn't drempt it would be as full as it was. Hit seemed to me that everybody on Factory Hill was there. They crowded on the porch and they was in the room next to where Walter lay and then a good many was crowded in his room.

31

Some stood out in the yard near the windows. Somehow, when I got there, I picked up courage and marched right through them people straight to Walter's bed. I bent over and tuk his hand and then kissed him on the lips, never carin' who saw it. 'I'm glad you've come, Mary,” he said.

“They was somebody in that crowd that had feelin' enough to get up and leave the room. In a little while they was all gone.

“I set there by Walter's bed and he told me he knew he didn't have long to live. He said he was goin't home to his Maker and they was no fear of death in his heart. 'And I don't want you to grieve after me,' he said. 'And if ever you meet another man you love, marry him. All I ask of you is, don't never go with any but nice decent boys.' Then after awhile he asked me if I'd promise to stay there in the house until the end came, and I said, 'I won't leave you, Walter.' And I never.

“I slept durin' the day and of a night I set up with Walter. Over and over he asked me not to grieve, and more than once he said he hoped to take my hand in heaven as his wife. Hit

seemed strange to me as I set there by his bed that I never knowed until I were losin' him how much I loved him.

“He died Thursday night while I held his hand and looked down at him, my eyes as dry as dry sand.

“I never shed a tear at the funeral and folks said I was the hard-hardedest girl they ever seen. Of course none of 'em knowed how much I were grievin' in my heart.

“I didn't stay in South Carolina long after Walter died. I wanted to come home to Ma. They was weeks and weeks that I could see Walter before me, and of a night I always dreampt he was livin'. I never had no picture of him because he thought it was sinful to have 'em made. 'Thou shalt have no graven images,' the Bible says, and Walter lived more accordin' to the teachin's of the scripture 32 than any person I've ever knowed. Many a time I've thought the Lord tuk him away from me because he was sech a Christian and I were a sinner. He thought it was best to take him while he had him saved, and not take no chances on me makin' a backslider out of him. Yes, Walter were one good Christian, and I'm goin' to meet/ him in heaven one day, too, and there'll be no parting.”

There was conviction in Mary's voice as she expressed her intention of meeting Walter Jones. I looked up at her as she stopped speaking and then at the glowing coals in the grate. What mental disposition Mary had made of John Cates was a question so active in my mind that I almost asked it. Mary looked at me and as if she had literally picked up the current of my thoughts she said, “As for John Cates, I'm sorry to say he died a unsaved man. He won't be in heaven I'm pretty certain. I never knowed him to say his prayers and he didn't go to church. John Cates was never a godly man I know in reason he were lost. Jest how much sin they were in his life I don't know, but I do know he'd stay away from home of a night and never say where he'd been. No, I'm sorry to say, but John Cates never went to heaven.”

Mary stooped over and put three lumps of coal on the fire with the small tongs which leaned against the wooden coal box. She stirred in the glowing coals and brought them into blaze. Then she straightened herself in her chair, folded her arms across her withered breasts, and gave her quick, throaty chuckle with its metallic undertones.

“Well, I declare,” she said, “hit do seem I've talked all day.”

“It has been a good day,” I said, getting up to leave.

“Wish you didn't have to go,” Mary said.

“It's beginning to get dark and I must hurry,” I replied.

“I've sure enjoyed your visit,” Mary declared, “and if you ever come to Glen Raven agin, please stop by to see me.”

33

“I certainly shall,” I promised, “and thank you so much for the dinner.”

“Hit wa'n't much, but I'm glad you enjoyed it. They's one thing I'd like to ask you before you go. Do you think I'll git the old age pension if I live to be 65? Even if Iry ain't married by then? The say you don't git it if you've got somebody able to take care of you. Married or not, Iry ain't able to take care of me on what he makes. A little money of my own would help out a sight. Do you think I'll git it?”

“I don't know all the provisions of the law,” I answered, “but I believe you'll be eligible for a pension when you reach [?].”

“I worked as long as I could and I'd work agin if they'd give me a job. That is if I could hold out. Hit may be, like they've got things speeded up in the mill now, I wouldn't fit in atall. But I shore did once. I run everything but the curls and the lappers.”

Library of Congress

Mary followed me out on the porch, and called my attention to a plant of green moss which hung in long streamers over the sides of the bucket in which it grew. “Stays green all winter,” she said. “I'd better bring it in tonight, too, because the air is blowing up chilly. I do love to tend my flowers.”